5: Bancroft H-4 (no date) 1883 Plateau

led war-horses are selected, and both rider and steed are gaily painted, and decked with feathers, trinkets, and bright-colored cloths. The war-party in most nations is under the command of a chief periodically elected by the tribe, who has no authority whatever in peace, but who keeps his soldiers in the strictest discipline in time of war. Stealthy approach and an unexpected attack in the early morning constitute their favorite tactics. They rush on the enemy like a whirlwind, with terrific yells, discharge their guns or arrows, and retire to prepare for another attack. The number slain is rarely large; the fall of a few men, or the loss of a chief decides the victory. When a man falls, a rush is made for his scalp, which is defended by his party, and a fierce hand-to-hand conflict ensues, generally terminating the battle. After the fight, or before it when either party lacks confidence in the result, a peace is made by smoking the pipe, with the most solemn protestations of good-will, and promises which neither party has the slightest intention of fulfilling. The dead having been scalped, and prisoners bound and taken up behind the victors, the party starts homeward. Torture of the prisoners, chiefly perpetrated by the women, follows the arrival. By the Flatheads and northern nations captives are generally killed by their sufferings; among the Sahaptins some survive and are made slaves. In the Flathead torture of the Blackfeet are practiced all the fiendish acts of cruelty that native cunning can devise, all of which are borne with the traditional stoicism and taunts of the North American Indian. The Nez Percé system is a little less cruel in order to save life for future slavery. Day after day, at a stated hour, the captives are brought out and made to hold the scalps of their dead friends aloft on poles while the scalp-dance is performed about them, the female participators meanwhile exerting all their devilish ingenuity in tormenting their victims.[170]

[170] Torture of Blackfeet prisoners; burning with a red-hot gun-barrel, pulling out the nails, taking off fingers, scooping out the eyes, scalping, revolting cruelties to female captives. The disputed right of the Flatheads to hunt buffalo at the eastern foot of the mountains is the cause of the long-continued hostility.